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A

MEMORIAL

OF

ABNER L. ELY.

"The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance."

PSALM CXII.

NEW YORK:
DE WITT C. LENT & COMPANY,
451 BROOME STREET.
1873.

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Memorial.

DURING the course of the year 1870, Mr. ABNER L. ELY suffered from several slight attacks of illness which, with some chronic symptoms, seemed to indicate a failure of the hitherto firm and robust health that had enabled him to be ever intensely active. In September, 1870, he had a severe fall, and, while he seemed temporarily to recover, it was manifest in a few months that he was gradually sinking under the effects of the fall and the inroads of disease.

In the spring of 1871, he decided to try the effect of a change to the air of the country at some distance from the sea-shore, and accordingly, in May, he went with a part of his family

to Westfield, Chautauqua County, New York. Here Mr. ELY greatly enjoyed the pureness and freshness of the air, but his fond hopes of recovery were not realized. When rapidly sinking at Westfield, Mr. ELY was greatly cheered and comforted by the expression of sympathy from the Session, and the following letter from his much-loved Pastor, in whose welfare and in that of his family he ever felt the deepest interest:

"WALPOLE, NEW HAMPSHIRE,
July 1, 1871.

"MY DEAR MR. ELY: We came up on Monday last to this beautiful village. So far, it seems to be a most desirable country home for us. The children are already better for air and exercise. They were a good deal run down when we came away.

"I was very much rejoiced to find that you had been relieved from the very severe attack in the early part of the week. For a day or two my heart was very heavy. But I am assured you are precious to Him in whose sight the life and death of his saints are precious.

"It is a great privilege and comfort to commit you in prayer to His almighty keeping. I cannot express to you, my dear Mr. ELY, how much you have been to me for these past six years in the way of kindness and sympathy and support. It is one of the most treasured recollections of my life. To see you once more would be a great joy. But God knows the best thing. We have a blessed hope of meeting in a better world if not here.

"Mrs. Murray sends her love and sympathy to you and Mrs. Ely. I shall wait anxiously to hear from your family concerning you.

"Yours affectionately,

"J. O. MURRAY."

Expression of sympathy from the Session of the Brick Church, forwarded to Mr. ELY at Westfield:

"55 PINE STREET, NEW YORK,
June 3, 1871.

"MY DEAR MR. ELY: I need not tell you how pleasant the duty is of transmitting to you the enclosed expression of warm regard and sincere sympathy of the Session of our Church.

"Very truly yours,

"HAMILTON ODELL."

At a regular meeting of the Session of the Brick Church, held at the Pastor's study, on the evening of Thursday, June 1st, 1871:

Present, Rev. JAS. O. MURRAY, D.D.

Elders, NAYLOR,
PATON,
CHURCH,
DUNNING,
BENNETT,
PARSONS,
ODELL.

Dr. Murray, with appropriate remarks, submitted the following, which was unanimously approved:

"The Session of the Brick Church, of which our beloved and honored brother, ABNER L. ELY, has been so long and so usefully a member, desire to convey to him, in this time of his long-continued suspension from active duties through ill health—

"*First:* Their sincere and constant sympathy with him in the prolonged illness with which he has been afflicted.

"*Secondly:* Their warm Christian affection and great personal esteem for him as a brother beloved, and their high appreciation of his wise counsel and devoted labors, through which the prosperity of the Brick Church has been so much promoted.

"*Thirdly:* Their assurances of constant prayer to God in his behalf, that it may please our Heavenly Father to restore his shattered health, and permit us once more to enjoy the pleasant Christian intercourse of past years with him in this Session, and the benefit of his Christian wisdom and devotedness.

"HAMILTON ODELL,

Clerk *pro tem.*"

Mr. ELY continued steadily to decline in strength, and died at the Westfield House, Westfield, on the seventh day of July, 1871.

His remains were removed to New York, and the funeral services were attended at his residence, 117 East Thirty-seventh Street, at 4 P.M., July 10th, 1871.

These services were conducted by his beloved Pastors, the Rev. Gardiner Spring, D.D.,

LL.D., and the Rev. James O. Murray, D.D. Dr. Murray read the Scriptures from the fifteenth chapter of I. Corinthians, and the fifth chapter of II. Corinthians, after which appropriate remarks were made and prayer was offered by the venerable Dr. Spring, for whom Mr. ELY had ever entertained the most fond and reverent affection.

Dr. Murray omitted remarks at this time, proposing to give the tribute he wished to the memory of Mr. ELY in a memorial discourse, after the opening of the Brick Church in the fall.

In its first issue after the decease of Mr. ELY, the Westfield newspaper contained this editorial notice:

"*Decease.*—ABNER L. ELY, a prominent and very extensive business man, of the city of New York, died at the Westfield House, in this village, on Friday, the 7th inst., of a lingering disease. He came here to improve his health; but the vital spark could not be rekindled in his

feeble constitution. The influence of our healthy climate and invigorating atmosphere as it was hoped for, was not sufficient to strengthen his frail constitution, and cure a disease long standing and chronic. Deceased was accompanied by his family, and he has several highly respectable relatives in the town of Ripley. He was also attended, during his last illness, by friends from New York city, to which place his remains were taken for interment. He was sixty-six years of age, and thoroughly an upright business-man. He will be missed from his daily walks in life by a family to whom he was warmly and affectionately attached, and by a large circle of sincere friends and acquaintances."

In a business communication to the *Commercial Advertiser* of New York city, Mr. ELY was noticed in this manner:

"The recent death of ABNER L. ELY, who for thirty years has held a leading position among real-estate brokers of New York, suggests a thought in reference to the important interests represented by men of his class. Mr. ELY was one of the comparatively few men engaged in real estate who rank high in integrity. He consented to accept of business offered only on certain conditions, which were explicitly understood by both parties, and which left no room

for a suspicion of fraudulent connivance or dishonorable dealing in any shape."

From the Special Correspondence of the Troy Daily Times.

"NEW YORK, *July* 14, 1871.—I notice the recent death of ABNER L. ELY, who has for thirty years been a prominent business-man in this city, and has met a more than usual degree of success. Mr. ELY eschewed the risks of trade, and established himself in a line which affords good profit without the necessity of capital. I refer to real-estate agency. The immense growth of this city, and the consequent increase of landed interests, has gradually led to an extensive system of service peculiar to the latter. Men who have buildings to let cannot tell always the available rate of rents as well as one who devotes his entire time to this specialty. The value of the use, as well as the value of the fee, is constantly changing, and for this reason real-estate holders need constant vigilance. Landlords can better afford to employ an agent, and pay the necessary commission, than to lose the services of a judicious adviser. For this reason most of the renting is in the hands of this class, from the banking palaces in Broadway down to the tenements of the poor.

"ABNER L. ELY had by skill and faithful attention built up a reputation, and acquired wealth. He had the control of a large part of the valuable commercial property in this city, and his death will be widely felt in this department. Indeed,

it will not be easy to renew in any successor the experience and discretion which only grow out of years of application."

OBITUARY.

Communicated, July 21, 1871, *to N. Y. Observer, N. Y. Evening Post, and N. Y. Daily Times.*

"Died in Westfield, N. Y., July 7th, ABNER L. ELY, aged sixty six years.

"MR. ELY was born in South Salem, Westchester County, N. Y. His father was a clergyman, and his early years were passed in the quiet scenes of a New-England parsonage. His early training, with its simplicity and frugality, Mr. ELY never forgot. At the age of eighteen, in the year 1823, he united with the Brick Church on profession of his faith. Eight years afterwards he was chosen a member of the Session, in which he continued to serve until his death, a period of forty years. His Christian life was marked from its beginning to its close by a positive, consistent, active piety. It passed under heavy trials, and they made it deeper, and purer.

"In later years it passed through prosperity, but this only made it a generous and fruitful piety. It was always marked by an intense love for the Kingdom of Christ. He had no greater joy than to watch its progress. He was uncommonly well

versed in every species of Missionary information, and nothing gave him a keener joy than to mark some new advance of the Redeemer's Kingdom in the regions of heathenism.

"So, also, he loved his own Church most devotedly. It was touching to see with what affection he would speak of its past history, with which for half a century he had been so strongly identified. Its prosperity was on his heart daily. "That beloved Church," he called it in a letter to his Pastor, dictated from his dying bed. His fond piety, his wise counsels, his long and large experience, his unshrinking fidelity, all leave a sad vacancy.

"He will be missed by his brethren in every department of the Church life. His friends have remarked his intense devotion to business, and with much solicitude have remonstrated with him, lest he should break himself down by it; but it was inspired by motives which redeemed it from everything like a worldly spirit, and invested it with a sacred nobleness of aim and effort.

"He had in years past, from circumstances beyond his control, been unfortunate in business, and felt the most imperative obligation resting on him to pay every cent of that indebtedness, principal and interest. How eagerly he strove to do this! How great his joy when he had, in the last year of his life, accomplished it! At the same time he was actuated by the most generous benevolence. His charities were many. He gave by

system, consecrating a portion of his income to God. There was no good cause to which he did not feel ready to respond.

"Spurred on by such motives as these—motives of highest integrity and warmest benevolence—he gave himself to business with unresting ardor. Since September last he had been an invalid, but the cheerfulness of his Christian character never forsook him. He was calm, and confident in Christian hope to the last. He sank gradually under the inroads of disease—an organic difficulty of the stomach. A few weeks since he went into the country for the relief which change of air might afford him, where he died, away from home, but in the midst of tender and devoted friends. His last hours were full of suffering; and he was overheard saying, in broken accents, "Come, Lord Jesus; come quickly." But ere he had ended this prayer, his Lord had come and taken him home."

The following communication appeared in the *New York Observer* of October 5th:

"Systematic Giving.—The late Abner L. Ely.

"Mr. A. D. F. Randolph, whose associations with Mr. Ely enabled him to judge of his character, said to the writer that it greatly *broadened* and *deepened* during the last years of his life. Official intercourse with him as an Elder of the Brick Church of this city, led his associates to form the same opinion. Mr. Ely was one of the most untiring and useful of Elders. Constantly

at his post, in season and out of season, his singleness of purpose in the service of the Lord was manifested. His large liberality was systematic from principle, and of him it may truly be said—

> 'For his bounty,
> There was no winter in 't ; an autumn 'twas
> That grew the more by reaping.'

"By means of perfect system he was enabled to carry on a very large business, involving personal attention to an immense amount of detail. Though eminently conservative in all concerning the Church, his clear business mind at once saw the advantages of the system of finance recommended to the Church in articles published in April last in the Presbyterian newspapers. Regarding them, he wrote as follows:

"'I have carefully read the articles you mentioned in regard to our "Church Work," and I hope that the General Assembly at this spring session will adopt a plan of concentrating the whole into one General Treasury, except it may be the Board of Publication.'

"The object of this communication is to call attention to these facts, and to notify the public that Rev. J. O. Murray, D.D., expects to refer at some length to the life and labors of Mr. Ely, on Sunday morning next, at the Brick Church, Thirty-seventh Street and Fifth Avenue, in this city."

At the close of the morning and Communion service on the first Sabbath in October, Dr. Murray gave notice that on the next Sabbath morning he would preach a Memorial Discourse for the late ABNER L. ELY, and that the morning service would be a memorial service.

MEMORIAL SERVICE.

BRICK CHURCH, *October* 7, 1871.

Conducted by the Pastor, the Rev. James O. Murray, D.D.

Chant by the Choir:

"Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord."

INVOCATION.

HYMN.

GIVE me the wings of faith to rise
Within the veil, and see
The saints above, how great their joys,
How bright their glories be!

Once they were mourning here below,
And wet their couch with tears;
They wrestled hard, as we do now,
With sins and doubts and fears.

I ask them whence their victory came:
They, with united breath,
Ascribe their conquest to the Lamb,
Their triumph to His death.

They marked the footsteps that He trod;
His zeal inspired their breast;
And, following their incarnate God,
Possess the promised rest.

Our glorious Leader claims our praise
For His own pattern given,
While the long cloud of witnesses
Show the same path to heaven.

Reading the Scriptures from the Forty-second Psalm and the twenty-first chapter of Revelation.

Chant by the Choir:

"And the Spirit said unto me, Write blessed are the dead that die in the Lord; yea, saith the Spirit, and their works do follow them."

Prayer.

Hymn.

High in yonder realms of light
Dwell the raptured saints above,
Far beyond our feeble sight,
Happy in Immanuel's love:
Pilgrims in this vale of tears,
Once they knew, like us below,
Gloomy doubts, distressing fears,
Torturing pain, and heavy woe.

But, these days of weeping o'er,
Passed this scene of toil and pain,
They shall feel distress no more,
Never, never weep again:
'Mid the chorus of the skies,
'Mid the angelic lyres above,
Hark, their songs melodious rise,
Songs of praise to Jesus' love!

Happy spirits! ye are fled
  Where no grief can entrance find;
Lulled to rest the aching head,
  Soothed the anguish of the mind;
Every tear is wiped away,
  Sighs no more shall heave the breast;
Night is lost in endless day,
  Sorrow in eternal rest.

DISCOURSE.

TEXT:—Proverbs xxii. 1. "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches."

THE distinction sometimes drawn between reputation and character is theoretical rather than practical. Reputation is the current opinion concerning a man. Character is the particular combination of moral and religious qualities, or *vice versa*, gathered round the core of each personality. Reputation is therefore something outward. It is to be found among men, in the streets, or on the housetops. Character is something inward. It is to be found within the man. It lives where the soul lives, acts where the soul acts.

But there is such a correspondence between the inward and the outward as to warrant the statement that reputation is generally a sure index to character. On the whole, and in the long run, men are rated about as they deserve. This correspondence does not rest upon casual and arbitrary grounds, but on a principle in the moral economy of things. It may be called the "law of manifestation." In nature it

makes rosebuds bloom, trees put out their peculiar leaves, the herb yield seed after his kind. In morals, it makes men consciously, or unconsciously, act out what they are within. "There is nothing hid that shall not be manifest."

The charitable man may not let "his left hand know what his right hand doeth," but if he is a charitable man, society will come to know what his left hand was not supposed to know. Hypocrisy may cunningly resist the operation of the law, and for a time may outwit it; but the law is stronger than the hypocrite and will triumph at last. Some natures are transparent, outspoken. Men see through them easily. With such, character and reputation go hand in hand. Other natures are opaque — reticent — have depth as well as stillness.

The title-page tells us little of what is in the volume. But there come to all such, emergencies in personal history, what are called "trying circumstances," and then the qualities, good or bad, come up to the surface, disclose themselves. Men quietly note the disclosure, and gauge the reputation accordingly. Concealment even, pushed to an extreme, is a revelation itself.

It is of reputation in this sense, as practically synonymous with *character*, that the proverb takes account in affirming that a good *name* is rather to be chosen than great riches. The proverb does not, of course, imply that the two things are incompatible, and that a man must choose between them as between God and mammon. It is a comparison of val-

ues. It insists that the highest values are immaterial and spiritual; that as between the two — and if the choice must come between the two — then, in any strict and true comparison of values, the good name is rather to be chosen than enormous wealth. Let us see then what goes to make a "good name," in the sense of the proverb.

First, the virtues which underlie and compose it must be positive in their type as to be known.

There are many commonplace virtues which enter into the formation of every "good name," but which, if they are not positive in their type and known as such, fail to make any impression on other people. They may exist in persons who have no great amount of vital energy in them. They may exist in apparently correct types, but without any power of a just self-assertion. To say a man is kind—that he is truthful, or temperate, and to say no more—is to say no more than may be said of hundreds, who yet have no "name" for such things, no decided galvanic influence for good in society. It is not of the essence of such virtues that they have a "name;" but it is essential that they have a "name," if to bare existence, potentiality is to be added. And if the virtues be not of the commonplace sort, the standard moral qualities on which the bare ongoing of society depends, the same rule holds good. Even a rare virtue must be something pronounced, if it is to make its mark. It must more than *exist;* it must live vigorously, and by its glad, strong life make impressions on minds untouched

by what is merely negative or feeble. The law of personal influence is that it works from above downward. The character that influences another character must overtop it. Influence must come like rain from heaven, not like springs from the depths below. But while all this is true, yet it is ever the unostentatious, untrumpeted virtues that make a "good name." The moment a man seeks in any way to have his supposed good qualities known, and in the least offensive way parades his virtues, he kills his influence. It is a sheer self-deception by which the thing is ever done to "gain influence." Nothing is gained, and all is lost, in the way of moral impression. Virtue, to sway other minds, must be positive, but it must be without self-consciousness. The moment it becomes self-conscious, its charm is gone; and when virtue has lost its attractiveness, it has lost its power. The strength of holiness is the beauty of holiness. Before goodness gets a "name" among men, becomes recognized and influential in any marked degree, it must,

Secondly, be known as a tested virtue, which has had full proof of its purity and strength.

A man's professions about virtue do not of themselves give him any moral hold on the community. The world is full of the praises of moral excellence. There is no more honesty nor truthfulness nor equity in admiring honesty and truthfulness and equity than there is in admiring sunsets. Any profession of particular virtues always awakens

dislike. One had rather not hear them spoken. Except for purposes of defence against attacks, the lips of a man concerning his own good qualities had best always be tightly shut.

So, too, it is not even what his friends may say about a man which gives him his "good name." He must earn it for himself in silence and in struggle, before his friends can do anything for him in the way of high commendation. They, it is true, may know him possessed of virtues, which for a time "blush unseen," and, if they do not "waste their sweetness upon the desert air," shed it only in a small circle. But the world looks on friends as too partial judges, too blind to faults, too eulogistic of excellencies. Reputations for goodness cannot be made by the laudations of friends.

The good name must rest on other and broader foundations. Men want to see moral qualities *tested*, put under some pressure, before they acknowledge the personal power of the goodness. Perhaps there is too much skepticism in regard to a moral excellence not known to have been tried and found faithful. It is a bad sign, perhaps, that proof is demanded so peremptorily of tried virtues. For surely a suspicious mood is an unhealthy mood, in the great public as in the individual. But the fact is that men demand a tried virtue, something which has come in contact with all sorts of men, which has been out in the world of business, which has seen something of sin and sinners as well as of prayers and preaching; and

when the demand for a tested moral character is met, then the "good name" is on all lips. Envy may still utter its malign detractions, moral corruption may still insinuate its base motives. But as for the public opinion, *that* stands by tried excellence, and says, "What has stood fire shall stand." Concerning, however, the substance as well as the conditions of a good name, observe,

Third, that the scriptural idea of it involves *moral excellence rooted in and springing from Christian life.*

If one reads the Bible with this guiding principle constantly in view, he cannot help being struck with the intensity and frequency of Biblical teaching upon moral virtues. The key-note is struck in the Decalogue onward through Psalms and Prophets till John the Baptist closes the old dispensation with his stern monitions to the publicans and soldiers: "Exact no more than is appointed you; do violence to no man; neither accuse any man falsely, and be content with your wages." The changes are rung on all highest ethical virtues—honesty, truthfulness, justice, purity, temperance, humanity; nor do these things subside in the higher spirituality of the New Testament. So far as morality goes, the Sermon on the Mount stands in the New Testament just where the Decalogue stands in the Old, at the beginning, in the very fore-front, and in the very highest pitch and strain of ethical teaching. What uninspired moralist approaches the apostle Paul in the scope and thoroughness and exactness of his moral teachings; and

what moral science ever written has in it such a transcendent utterance of the stringency of a pure and high morality as is found in the Epistle of James?

But all through, from beginning to end, there rings from the word of God a protest against any division of the two things, religion from morality—or of morality from religion. One makes religion a form, a contagion, an offence to man and God. The other makes morality a usurper and a mockery. The New Testament inculcates Christianity as a mode of salvation from sin. It centres in the cross of Christ. That cross rises everywhere from the pages of the Epistles. But the Bible has provided no salvation which leaves out of account moral virtues. It allows them no place whatever as any part of the salvation. They do not justify. They have no meritorious quality as procuring salvation. They are no offset for breach of religious duties. They are no substitute for them. They are no equivalent. But they are essential to Christian life. It is incomplete without them. They spring from it vigorously and completely whenever that life has been strong in any human soul. Take the life of Christ—and if you would feel how infinitely below the ideal of the true life for man a mere bald ethical embodiment of what men praise so profusely as moral virtues is, just speak of Christ's human life as it was such an embodiment. Call him a *perfectly honest man, a perfectly truthful man*, a perfectly *just* man.

What a terrible sense of omission, if one stops here! What a merest glimpse or shadow of that perfect life which had its

power and glory so transcendently on its heavenward side! A good name then, answering to the Biblical idea, has its moral excellence vested in and springing from the Christian life. That gauges its standard according to the Divine Law. That gives it life and power by the life of Jesus within the soul. That makes it lustrous with such spiritual qualities as the Holy Ghost works in all true Christian souls. That takes from it all its delusions, as any satisfactory ground of acceptance with God; but adds to it the high and priceless charm of a disinterested virtue, a pure morality for morality's own sake. And when pure and undefiled religion is thus made to be the source and rule of pure and undefiled morality, then the good name makes its mark unchallenged. No man disputes the genuineness of such religion. No man suspects the work of such morality. They associate the name of the man in whose soul they meet with every influence a human goodness can exert.

We are now prepared to see the worth of a good name, to estimate this on high and permanent grounds; to understand that for its possessor a "good name" really means all the best that this life has to offer him; for,

It implies the *assured possession* of moral and religious character. The name is a thing, a reality, and that reality is the highest good. For highest values in this life are spiritual. Money cannot buy them. Power cannot constrain them. If a rich man has, along with his great riches, a good name,

it will not be because of his riches—sometimes even in spite of them. This "good name" he attained by a divine grace helping him, which comes by free gift, without money and without price. He got it by struggle against temptation; by self-discipline; by sobriety and watchfulness; by acting under a sense of his responsibility to God; by believing in Jesus Christ and in his gospel; by steady persistence in a plain path of duty, day in and day out. It is a growth. Years of a faithful life are in it. That "name," if you would know its secret history, you would have to know a thousand secret hours, when a brave and manly struggle was fought through. Ask some mighty oak how it was built up, and get for answer, "Light from suns far away in depths of infinite space, rains from oceans far beyond the eastern and western hills, storms that swept through my branches years ago, rooting me more firmly in the earth—all these distant and remote agencies, as well as the juices of the soil where roots are struck, and the dews of heaven where boughs are spread, reared me, trunk and branches." So it is with human character—a "good name" which covers it, behind and within which is this spiritual product and force we call character, is such a growth. It represents the highest good for man: if he have attained it in the high Christian sense, he has the best this life can give him as a possession. It is inalienable. It is beyond the reach of decay. It is what old heathendom sought for so eagerly, the highest good, the "*summum bonum*." In itself, the "good name" is the best thing. It is the best possession.

But it has other values. As a source of usefulness it has independent and inestimable value. It represents so much *personal influence.* Men are little moved by abstractions. How many men have been won to the practice of virtue by Adam Smith's theory of the moral sentiments, or by Paley's moral science? Now, the power of the gospel to win men to a holy life comes from the fact that the teachings of Jesus are all put into his life as things which live, move, and have being there. His words are deeds, as his works are doctrines in turn. A "good name" means this: so much Christian excellence made influential; so many personal trials of character ordained to persuade men to go and do likewise. Why, Christians are kept in this world for just two things: first, to be disciplined in holy living; and second, to make Christian truth quick and powerful by Christian example. A "good name" propagates Christian virtue. It is as much ordained for this of God, as pulpits are to preach his gospel, and the two things are inseparably bound together. How much stronger that pulpit is which can point to "good names" as examples of the truths it teaches. They are as ointment poured forth; and only by this agency of a good name is the widest sphere of usefulness ever found. Posthumous usefulness is a grand reality in this world of ours. Good men are remembered when they die, despite all the tendency, in the whirl and rush of this mighty life in our metropolis, and in which the deaths of good men come with such a terrible sense of vacancy. In spite of all the tendency to forget our good men so soon and hurry by to our little

dreams of success and pleasure, they have got a hold on men's hearts and consciences, while they are remembered; and wherever they are remembered they testify for God and goodness. The good is not interred with their bones. Their "names" are a tower of strength. They speak—how differently from the names of the living! How full of a majestic pathos and spirituality! As Carlyle said of Hugh Miller's character, it is a voice from the silent kingdoms, and hath something of religion in it.

Nor do we reach the full estimate of its value till we consider the sources of happiness which are found in a "good name."

To enjoy the confidence, to hold the esteem, to enlist the affections of our fellow-men, is among the purest as it is among the noblest blessings of life. There is no stronger instinct in the soul than the love of approbation. It may be awfully degenerated into an indiscriminating greed of popular applause, to gain which, all highest and best tendencies are sacrificed, and all mean and desperate shifts resorted to. But regulated and regenerated by Christianity, this love of approbation may do great things for men. It is a guard against the temptations to bring a blemish on character by doubtful courses of conduct. It is an impulse, an inspiration for achieving things which deserve and command the esteem of the good. And when a man has, by years of approved conduct and honored because honorable dealing, by years of

Christian consistency and devotedness in Christian character, by years of a manifested excellence in every walk of life—earned the "good name," and men never speak it but with confidence and respect and affection, the conscious happiness is great. The noblest of instincts is satisfied. The highest of aspirations, short of favor with God, is satisfied. For though it may fall very far short of anything like immortality, and may have in it no element of "fame," though it may be confined to a small circle of men, comparatively, and last for only a generation or two of those within that circle, yet is it happiness to have achieved it. But beyond this personal satisfaction, the happiness insured to children and kindred by the possession of a "good name" is beyond all price. There are fathers in this city to-day, rolling in ill-gotten wealth, whose names are the synonyms for a hard, mean, unscrupulous, tricky, greedy avarice, or are the synonyms for a bold, shameless, extortionate, public robbery, whose children cannot mention their names in the ears of generations to come, without knowing that their names are cast out as evil, loaded down with infamous memories. Between the lines of the last will and testament bequeathing to the children they may have left behind their stocks or real estate, are to be found written in invisible ink other bequests, which time like fire will bring out, and thus they will read: "*I bequeath to my children a name which was not good but evil in thoughts of all men. I give and bequeath to them a memory which wakens no thoughts but those of shame and*

contempt. I give and bequeath to them curses from the lips of those I have overreached and defrauded, and pity from those who shudder to see how in this world innocent children must sometimes suffer for guilty parents." But when a good man dies and leaves to his children an honored name, he leaves them what is a source of life-long happiness to them. They will never hear the name so dear to them mentioned but with something of reverence and love. Often and often in life, when they least expect it, in distant journeys to remote places, from strangers whose faces they had never seen before, on account of acts never known till then, that name will be spoken of in a way not so much to make them proud as grateful, not so much to flatter any sense of personal merits or consequences as to make them sensible of God's goodness in giving them such a parentage. Life has no richer blessing for us than those of a godly ancestry. To be sprung from a nobility whose blood is tainted with vices, whose escutcheon is blotted here and there with foul and ugly blots, is nothing but a doom. Better for that man had he been born of an honest weaver, or any honest man whose only title to nobility was his integrity. For days are coming when pedigrees will not be looked for in Burke's Peerage, but in the character of one's ancestors for truth and goodness and piety, and deeds of worth.

Aside from all influences in forming character which come from godly parents while living, the influences alone which come from their memories when dead exert a beneficial

power for which to rise up and call them blessed. It is a restraint, and it is an inspiration. It is a restraint from evil. It is an inspiration for good. Life is made up, so far as its happiness is concerned, very considerably of happy memories. What is a happy event to-day, becomes a happy memory to-morrow, and lives on in a sweet immortality. So, if the good name of a parent is one blessed store of happy memories for children, they go through life, from the hour the grave closes over the honored dust, with the ever-recurring felicities of home recollections, sacred and noble, clustering around the good name of the parent, and transfigured by death into something more sacred, nobler, and more powerful.

You have anticipated, I doubt not, the application of what has been said to the life of him of whom this discourse is designed as a memorial. Assuredly the name of ABNER L. ELY is a "good name chosen rather than great riches." It fulfills every demand of the "good name." The virtues suggested by its mention are positive, marked, and in their sphere eminent virtues. They were never paraded or trumpeted—but they were never "hid under a bushel." They have been tested by a life of fifty years and more in this metropolis. They were Christian virtues—distinctly and distinctively such. He came to this city over half a century ago, a lad, from the quiet scenes of a New-England parsonage, bringing with him nothing but its frugal habits, its simple tastes, its intelligence, its untiring industry, its love of purity and law, its faithful Christian

training. Like so many of the New-England people of that day, he was specially drawn to the ministrations of the senior pastor of this church. Under them he became religiously impressed, and, in January, 1823, became a member of this church on confession of his faith. Eight years after that, a young man of twenty-seven years of age, he was chosen an elder in the church. It is in place here to speak of the strength and sacredness with which he regarded these church-ties. They were, in his view, too sacred, too dear to be sacrificed, except for the most stringent reasons. It was with him a question of usefulness and influence in the Church to attach himself to some church, and then to follow its fortunes through good report and through evil report. Hence grew up in him a love of the Church of Christ, which I have never seen surpassed.

Like charity, it began with him at home. This church was the object of a most self-sacrificing, tender, prayerful, consecrated devotion. His eye would fill as he recounted its past successes in this city in bearing on the kingdom of the Redeemer! It would fill as quickly on every sign of present progress in her borders! How watchful he was over its interests! How freely he assumed every responsibility in regard to its welfare—never courting it, but never shrinking from it! How hopeful, how confident, how tender, how true, in all his church relations! How sagacious in his counsels — how firm in his

convictions, yet how respectful to those of others! and how ready to be a leader or a co-worker, as the demand on him should be!

Yet if, like charity, this love of the Church began at home—in his affection for this particular church with its eminent and blessed history—it was expansive, and was a love for the whole. He loved the Church as the body of Christ—the fullness of Him who filleth all in all. He was jealous of her prerogatives—and distrusted everything which looked like a usurpation of her province and functions. He loved to be associated with Christians of other names in doing the work of the Church. For years he was a liberal and yearly contributor to the American Board of Foreign Missions, as well as to our own. This came out indeed most clearly in the wide range of his charities. We all know how bountiful and cheerful he was as a giver. If God loveth a cheerful giver, what an affection he must have cherished for this ready and cheerful giver!

Giving by system—consecrating to God a regular portion of his income—he gave with discrimination always, but with heartiness and joy whenever he did give. No man bore a warmer side of Christian confidence and charity toward our City Missions than he did. Word has reached me during the past week from the City Mission Rooms, that he paid every quarter a considerable sum toward the support of one of the most flourishing Missions, and had done

so for years. Another charity which especially interested him was the education of young men for the ministry. More than once I have gone to him suggesting that our Session had better aid a deserving young man — when he would insist on undertaking it for himself. The pastor of one of our city churches to-day was thus an unconscious beneficiary of his, and was brought thus through his theological studies. How he supported our own Mission Chapel —with what liberality of giving and whole-souled devotion of care and counsel—I need not recount here. How his heart went out in the deepest affection for, and most Christian enthusiasm in our Board of Home Missions, those who managed that Board will willingly testify. And just as lovingly and hopefully and prayerfully, and joyfully too, his eye rested on the vast work of Foreign Missions. As a layman he was singularly well read in all the literature of Missions. He made it a speciality in his religious reading. You could scarcely mention to him a Missionary field with which he was not somewhat acquainted. He followed the course of Missionary progress from month to month, by a variety of Missionary journals which you found always fresh on his table.

And yet that which in the *public* estimation of him will more than anything else entitle him to the possession of the "good name," will be the high sense of what absolute business integrity demands at the hands of a christian man of business. In the crisis of 1837, when so many business-men

went under the wave of financial disaster, he was carried down. For years a narrow and stringent poverty proved him sorely and tried his faith sharply. It came out like gold tried in the fire. That faith endured both tests—that of adversity, and that more searching one of prosperity. The one did not uproot it, the other did not rot it. It grew broader and deeper under prosperous influences. It was made stauncher and more Christ-like under adverse circumstances. When at length he emerged from the straits of his poverty, into a slow but steady and growing career of business success, his eye was set upon one goal. He was determined, if industry and economy and energy and patience could do it, to discharge every business obligation, principal and interest. It acted on him like an inspiration. He toiled for it as some men toil for fame. The motives, indeed, under which he worked, were of the noblest kind, so far as business success is concerned — to pay his debts to the last cent, to give liberally to all good charities, to provide comfortably for his family; thus these motives were the spurs to his activity. Love of money for money's sake, was not in him. No man was more deeply immersed in his business, and yet no man took into his business and brought away from it a less worldly spirit than he.

But of all these motives, that which was deepest and uppermost was the desire to discharge his indebtedness. This gave him most solicitude; and when at last the goal was reached which for more than thirty years he had

been striving to reach, he was far more joyful than any of his creditors, from some of whom it was among the highest satisfactions of his life to have received acknowledgments, and in one instance a return of a portion paid, which did them honor as it gave him joy.*

It was among the last expressed wishes of Mr. ELY, that everything pertaining to his funeral should be of the simplest and least ostentatious character. He was a plain man, loving simplicity in all things; and I would not willingly to-day transgress the limits of Christian propriety, or disregard his modest wishes, by any undue eulogy. But I cannot forget, and you must not forget that these are times when many men among us are choosing great riches rather than a good name; when the old-time virtues of strictest business integrity — high-toned business dealing — elevated business intercourse, are forgotten—even shunned and disparaged. It is right, then—it is demanded, that the pulpit so recognize and even so eulogize a lofty illustration of business integrity, that all success by illegitimate means—by dishonesties, petty or great, concealed or open—should be made to appear a mean and contemptible thing. It is the only salvation from a business degeneracy which threatens to devour all that is noble among us, for those who create and regulate public opinion, pulpit and press, speakers and thinkers and writers, to make honesty, infinitely more than the best policy, the lofty, pure manhood.

*See letter on page 50.

The last months of his life were spent under the slow, insidious progress of fatal disease. Hopeful to a singular degree by constitution, he added to this a most cheerful and patient waiting on his Heavenly Father. Not expecting death, not dreading death, he lived from day to day, bearing the suspense in a frame of wonderful calmness and resignation. And when death came at last, away from home, it found him thinking only of others. He was not thinking enough about his own assured and expected blessedness to be triumphing in it. He had committed his soul to his Saviour, and knew it was safe. And so this good man died. He was heard, by a devoted and beloved sister bending over him, to murmur feebly and brokenly, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly;" and before the prayer had ceased to tremble on his lips, his faithful Saviour had come, and had taken him to the appointed and prepared mansion in his Father's house. We cannot think of one so active as he, simply going to a heaven of rest. It must be a heaven of holy activity, to be heaven for him. And so we read of the saints before the throne of God, that they serve him day and night in his temple.

"A good Christian," said the eloquent Vinet, "is the best apologist for Christianity." His life is a witness faithful and true. In it are evidences which appeal, if not to reason, to something higher than reason, to conscience and faith. Mark, then, the character of this departed servant of the Lord Jesus. How entirely he rested for salvation

only on the infinite merits of his Saviour! How devotedly he clung to the faith of the gospel—to the truth as it is in Jesus! He was rooted and built up in Christ. He grew in grace and in the knowledge of Christ for nigh fifty years. His character ripened and grew broader and deeper to the last. His voice was ever heard among us for all wise progress. His face was toward the rising sun. And, steadfast in the faith, abounding in every good work, he has left us a "*good name—chosen rather than great riches.*"

Prayer.

Hymn.

"Forever with the Lord!"
Amen; so let it be;
Life from the dead is in that word;
'Tis immortality.

Here in the body pent,
Absent from Him I roam:
Yet nightly pitch my moving tent
A day's march nearer home.

My Father's house on high,
Home of my soul! how near,
At times, to faith's foreseeing eye,
Thy golden gates appear!

"Forever with the Lord!"
Father, if 'tis thy will,
The promise of that faithful word
Even here to me fulfill.

So, when my latest breath
Shall rend the vail in twain,
By death I shall escape from death,
And life eternal gain.

Knowing as I am known,
How shall I love that word,
And oft repeat before the throne,
"Forever with the Lord!"

Benediction.

The following editorial appeared in the New York *Observer*, of October 12th, 1871:

"The Rev. Dr. Murray, of the Brick Church, preached an admirable discourse last Sunday morning, in memory of the late ABNER L. ELY, an elder in that Church, and a well-known citizen. The text was, "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches." The preacher proved that Mr. ELY made the right choice, being one of those few men whose strong principles of honesty, integrity, and uprightness, acted out, form a character that is a tower of strength and beauty. In 1837, Mr. ELY failed in business, and steadily, through thirty long years after, toiled manfully, and lived frugally, until he had paid every debt, with interest in full. Such an example is for our time and all time. If the leading business-men of our city, especially if our public and political men, could read or hear this discourse, it might perhaps do them good."

Communication from the Board of Trustees of the Brick Church:

"NEW YORK, *October* 27, 1871.

"MRS. ABNER L. ELY:

"*My Dear Madam:* By a resolution of the Board of Trustees of the Brick Church, the following entry was directed to be made upon their Book of Minutes, and a copy of the same

to be sent to the family of our esteemed friend, ABNER L. ELY:

"In the death of our late associate and friend, ABNER L. ELY, the Board of Trustees lament the loss of their most useful member, who, while fulfilling in the highest sense the responsiblity of the Christian Eldership, also accepted, as a member of this Board, and as Treasurer of the Church, the almost entire care of her temporal interests for many years.

"We shall always remember his unaffected piety and devotion to the cause of his Master, his zeal and activity in the service of the Church, his Christian liberality in feeling and action, and the example he has left us of one who, having done well his work on earth, has entered upon his reward in heaven.

"F. W. DOWNER,

Clerk of the Board."

The most touching incidents, showing how wonderfully an over-ruling Providence brought good out of evil in the results of Mr. ELY'S failure, by the benefit and relief afforded in the payment of principal and interest to persons or their heirs, who at the time of the failure were in affluence, but subsequently had

been reduced to the most stringent circumstances, were verbally communicated; but the appended letters and extracts show the appreciation in which Mr. ELY was held by his business patrons and associates:

"RALEIGH, *July* 10, 1871.

"MR. —— ——:

"*Sir:* Yours, with the painful intelligence of the death of Mr. ABNER L. ELY, came this evening.

"I have not known him long, but he has been to me a kind friend and a good adviser; and if he in so short a time attached me so warmly to him, in a long and useful life he must have had so many to love him that the sad news will go from house to house all around the world.

"I regret that I am so far off that I could not have been present to attend his remains to the grave."

"NEW HAVEN, 8*th July*, 1871.

"JOHN ELY, ESQ.:

"*Dear Sir:* To-day's paper brings intelligence which I feel to be sad—the death of your excellent brother, whom, within the past two years, I had learned to look up to with respect and tender confidence. I had long known him before, but slightly.

"I should not do justice to my feelings of regard for his memory did I not write just this line to say, that I feel that I have lost a friend of singularly pure mind and purposes. How well for the world it would be were there more men like him, of sturdy, old-fashioned Christian views!

"Accept my sympathy.

"Yours truly."

"BALLYFRENCH, KIRKCUBBIN, IRELAND,
24th August, 1871.

"DEAR SIR: I am in receipt of your favor of the 10th inst., enclosing bill of exchange for ——, which, compared with the last statement of accounts from the late Mr. ELY, is all correct.

"I feel truly thankful to you for sending me the obituary notice of the death of Mr. ELY; it shall be retained by me while I live. Although I never had the happiness of seeing him, yet I am thankful to God we were one in spirit. That his mantle may fall on you is my sincere prayer; and may we all be followers of him as he was of Christ, and thus through grace live the life of the righteous, so that our last end may be like his.

"I am, dear sir,

"Yours very sincerely."

"RYE BEACH, NEW HAMPSHIRE, }
July 19, 1871. }

"DEAR SIR: Your letter of the 17th inst., with enclosures, reached me this morning. I there found, with profound regret, the first intimation I received of the death of the excellent and much respected Mr. A. L. ELY. Many years of personal business intercourse with him had taught me to respect and like him as he deserved to be by all those who came in contact with him. Mr. ELY belonged to that class of straightforward, thoroughly honest, high-minded men of business, who, unfortunately, fast disappear from our midst. Receive the expression of my most sincere sympathy for this severe though not unexpected loss.

* * * * * * *

"Very respectfully yours."

"NEW HAMBURGH, *Monday Evening.*

"MR. JOHN ELY: I received at noon to-day your letter of the 8th, announcing the death of your brother ABNER. I have feared this event, and yet hoped even contrary to my judgment. The loss I have sustained is no ordinary one. It is not often that a friendship like that of ours should have continued unvarying for so many years, and I am very sensible of this.

"I am, dear sir,

"Respectfully yours."

"NEW YORK, *Oct.* 18, 1866.

"ABNER L. ELY, ESQ.:

"*Dear Sir:* Your esteemed favor of the 12th inst. came duly to hand, covering your check for ——. After giving you many thanks, allow me to congratulate you on the uprightness and honesty of your character, knowing that it is the highest that any man can aspire to and obtain. And when I find one who has attained to that elevation which you have, I feel a strong desire to do him homage; and I want the privilege to hold him up as a bright example in this degenerate age, that all men may go and do likewise; for 'an honest man is the noblest work of God.' Allow me to renew my thanks and congratulations, and believe me,

"Your friend."

"MR. ABNER L. ELY:

"*Dear Sir:* Allow me to express my thanks to you in acknowledging your communication made to me on Saturday.

"I was entirely surprised, as, had I known of the existence of such a debt, I also know that I should not have the slightest claim for its payment, for more than one reason; therefore I consider the paying me two thousand four hundred and twenty-eight dollars, gratuituous on your part, and feel the kindness and liberality more in consequence. Doubtless it will please you to know that the money will be very

useful to me as my means are very limited. . . . . With renewed expressions of gratitude and surprise, believe me, dear sir,

"Yours sincerely."

"NEW YORK, *May* 25, 1870.

"ABNER L. ELY, ESQ.:

"*Dear Sir:* Your very unexpected favor of 23d is at hand, bringing to my mind a matter long since lost sight of by me, but not so by you, as your check for —— dolls. shows; and, while it is pleasant for me to receive, it is also gratifying to know that it must be one of the very pleasantest acts of your whole life, to carry out what must have been for years *the* great desire of your heart to accomplish.

"Please accept my sincere regards for your future welfare and happiness.

"Very respectfully yours."

"NEW YORK, *April* 22, 1869.

"MR. ABNER L. ELY:

"*Dear Sir:* Permit us to acknowledge your very unexpected communication of yesterday, which so pleasantly revives an unfortunate occurrence dating many years back; and in so doing, to add that the principles which prompt such action have our fullest appreciation.

"That neither of our late lamented predecessors, with whom this obligation was properly contracted, has survived to witness another of these rare exhibitions of virtuous probity, may be a matter of sincere regret to both of us."

* * * * * * *

"NEW YORK, *July* 18, 1870.

"MR. A. ELY:

"*Sir:* My sister, Madame D——, desires me to acknowledge the receipt of your note, with its enclosure, received on Saturday, July 16th.

"In thanking MR. ELY for the amount received, words would be inadequate to express my sister's feelings regarding the transaction dictated by such a high sense of honor, in bringing to mind a debt of so long standing.

"Believe me, sir, no one more than Madame D—— can appreciate the highly honorable action.

"Respectfully,

"MISS D——."

"NEW HAVEN, *March* 20, 1869.

"ABNER L. ELY, ESQ.:

"*Dear Sir:* Most gratefully do I acknowledge the letter and contents received from you this morning. I do

[illegible] appreciate [illegible] [illegible] thus paying [illegible] debt from which you so [illegible] freed; and I feel it right you should know how very acceptable this money is.

"Mr. ——'s estate yielded so much less than was anticipated, that for years I have lived on a very limited income.

"Accept my acknowledgments and gratitude that it has been my lot to [illegible] so truly influenced by the true principle of honor; and believe me, with sincere respect and esteem,

"Your friend,

"Mrs. ——"

"Brooklyn, 23*d July*, 1870.

Abner L. Ely, Esq.

"*Dear Sir*: Yours of ye 20th inst., inclosing check for * * * * principal and interest, on an indebtedness to the old firm of ——, is at hand. I hardly know how to express my *surprise and gratification* in the receipt of this money; not so much, I trust, in its money value, as from its *moral worth*. Your own experience in mercantile life must bear witness to the rarity of such returns, after having been outlawed and forgotten. So far as it regards *yourself*, it is only the *natural outgrowth* of those *principles* which you have illustrated by an active Christian life; and I sincerely thank *you*, and *thank God*,

for such an example by his followers. In order that you may know all the *good* you have done by this act, I will state that it is all devoted to sacred charity (my share of it); * * * *, to a widow with six children in a very destitute condition, who just now is without *any* resource to pay her monthly rent; * * * * to a woman in very poor health, without any home, and dependent on the kindness of friends (not relations); * * * * to the widow of ———, who was a co-partner of ——— at that time, with the * * interest. Mrs. ——— was left a widow twelve years since, with a family of five children, with *no resources whatever*, except a policy of life insurance on her husband of * * * *. So you readily perceive that you have multiplied your donation fourfold in intrinsic value. The estate of ——— will receive the other, * * * *, and my only wish is, that it might receive similar destinations.

"With very great respect, and many thanks,

"I remain, truly yours."

"New York, *February* 13, 1869.

"Abner L. Ely, Esq.:

"*My Good Friend:* I formally acknowledged the receipt of your check for * * * *, being the amount, adding interest, of your liability to the firm of ———, but from which you were legally and honorably absolved.

"I now desire to return you the thanks of the parties interested, and their appreciation of the honorable motives which have prompted you to take this action, and which have only added to the esteem we have always entertained towards you. Mrs. ——— and myself, who represent two-thirds of the interests involved, do not feel satisfied to retain, under the circumstances, our proportions of the amount, and I therefore inclose you my check for * * * *, which you can dispose of in any way your benevolent disposition directs. The balance of the amount, * * * *, I shall send to the other party in interest, whose circumstances are different, and over whose actions we have no control.

"Yours truly,"

Obituary.

Died, In Westfield, N. Y., July 7th, ABNER L. ELY, aged 66 years.

Mr. Ely was born in South Salem, Westchester Co., N. Y. His father was a clergyman, and his early years were passed in the quiet scenes of a New England parsonage. His early training, with its simplicity and frugality, Mr. Ely never forgot. At the age of eighteen, in the year 1823, he united with the Brick Church on profession of his faith. Eight years afterwards he was chosen a member of the Session, in which he continued to serve until his death, a period of forty years. His Christian life was marked from its beginning to its close by a positive, consistent, active piety. It passed under heavy trials, and they made it deeper and purer.

In later years it passed through prosperity, but this only made it a generous and fruitful piety. It was always marked by an intense love for the Kingdom of Christ. He had no joy greater than to watch its progress. He was uncommonly well versed in every species of missionary information, and nothing gave him a keener joy than to make some new advance of the Redeemer's Kingdom in the regions of heathanism.

So, also, he loved his own church most devotedly. It was touching to see with what affection he would speak of its past history, with which for half a century he had been so strongly identified. Its prosperity was on his heart daily. "That beloved church," he called it in a letter to his pastor, dictated from his dying bed. His fond piety, his wise counsels, his long and large experience, his unshrinking fidelity, all leave a sad vacancy.

He will be missed by his brethren in every department of the church life. His friends have remarked his intense devotion to business, and with much solicitude have remonstrated with him lest he should break himself down by it: but it was inspired by motives which redeemed it from everything like a worldly spirit, and invested it with a sacred nobleness of aim and effort.

He had in years past, from circumstances beyond his control, been unfortunate in business, and felt the most imperative obligation resting on him to pay every cent of that indebtedness, principal and interest. How eagerly he strove to do this! How great his joy when he had, in the last year of his life, accomplished it! At the same time he was actuated by the most generous benevolence. His charities were many. He gave by system, consecrating a portion of his income to God.

There was no good cause to which he did not feel ready to respond. Spurred on by motives such as these—motives of highest integrity and warmest benevolence—he gave himself to business with unresting ardor. Since September last he had been an invalid, but the cheerfulness of his Christian character never forsook him. He was calm and confident in Christian hope to the last. He sank gradually under the inroads of disease—an organic difficulty of the stomach. A few weeks since he went into the country for the relief which change of air might afford him, where he died, away from home, but in the midst of tender and devoted friends. His last hours were full of suffering, and he was overheard saying in broken accents, "Come, Lord Jesus; come quickly." But ere he had ended this prayer, his Lord had come and taken him home.—[Com.

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